

CHURCH-OFFICERS, *and their* MISSION.

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A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd at a  
Publick Ordination.

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By *C. BASSNETT*,  
Minister of the Gospel in *Leverpool*.

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I TIM. III. 1.

*This is a true Saying, If a Man desire the Office  
of a Bishop, he desireth a good Work.*

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L O N D O N :

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CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

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TO MY  
Reverend BRETHREN,

Of { Bolton  
and  
Warrington } Districts.



*HERE send abroad the Sermon, which was preach'd at an Ordination, in which both Classes had an equal Concern; hoping, that what was of some Service from the Pulpit, may be of some more Service from the Press.*

*I HAVE confin'd myself entirely to the Scripture, where both We, and our People, may receive the utmost Satisfaction.*

THE *directly* contrary Ways, that our Adversaries in this Argument take, may serve to establish us in the present Truth.

Dr. HAMMOND, and those that follow him, say, "That the Presbyters we read of in Scripture, are in a proper Sense Bishops; and that no Inferior Order was instituted by the Apostles." Now, this makes Scripture-Presbyters, and Scripture-Bishops, to be the same; and unavoidably excludes the Three-fold Order from having a Foundation in the Word of God.

WE read in the New Testament of several Presbyters in one, and the same City; nay, in one and the same Church: Nothing can be more consistent with the Notion that we have of a Scripture-Presbyter or Bishop, than this; tho' it quite destroys the Notion the Doctor would advance upon it.

OTHERS seeing that this is not at all tenable, go quite another Way to work, and say the clean contrary, "That by Bishops in Scripture, we are to understand Simple Presbyters, or \* Ministers of the middle Order," as they style it.

Now

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\* See Mr. Robert's Sermon before the Bishops and Clergy of Exon, p. 19.



NOW *this as much destroys the Threefold Order, that's contended for, as the other does; and drops my LORDS the Bishops in at the Bargain, who are the most essential Part of the Scheme.*

BUT *for Answer to this, we are told Theodoret's Opinion, "That those of the highest Order, now call'd Bishops, were at first called Apostles; and the second Order, now call'd Presbyters, had then the Title also of Bishops."*

'TIS *plain, this was but a mere Supposition of Theodoret's: He alledges no Vouchers, that it was so in the Times of the Apostles; and without proper Vouchers, he could no more tell, that it was so in their Time, who was a Writer in the Fifth Century, than we can that live in the Eighteenth; so that the whole Scheme at last rests upon a mere empty, unproved Supposition. This is notable Scripture-Proof doubtless! 'Twere well, if any Thing would make some Men weary of uncharitable, dividing Notions, and lead them to the more concerning Points of practical Christianity. But this perhaps may be a Thing rather to be wish'd for, than expected.*

EVERY *good Man's Satisfaction, must lie in this, The Sense of his own Devotedness to GOD, and the laying out of himself in his proper*

*per* Way and Character for the Spreading of Serious Religion. *And that This may flourish in our several Congregations, and in all Religious Assemblies. is, I doubt not, Your earnest Prayer, as well as His, who is*

Your Affectionate Brother,  
and Servant,

*C. Bassnett.*

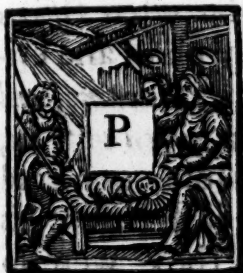


*And*



ROM. x. 15.

*And how shall they Preach,  
except they be sent? —*



REACHING being the Part of *this* Day's Work, that devolved on me, I could not think of a properer Argument to insist upon, than a *regular Mission* into the *Ministry*; to which the Words, I have just now read, very plainly Point; *How shall they preach, except they be sent?*

THERE is indeed, but one Part of the Ministerial Work instanc'd in the *Text*; but if a Mission be necessary for that, it will follow of Course, that 'tis necessary for the other Parts too. Therefore without spending Time in prefacing the Words, (which especially *now* is very precious) I shall observe to you this *Point of Doctrine* from 'em.

*Doct.* THAT a REGULAR MISSION, is necessary to make Persons AUTHORITATIVE PREACHERS, and MINISTERS of the GOSPEL.

Now



Now in Treating upon this *Point*, I would propose to do the following Things.

- I. To open to you, in some *Propositions*, the Nature of a Regular *Mission* into the *Ministry*.
- II. EVINCE the *Necessity* of it to you. And then,
- III. DRAW *two* or *three Inferences* from the Whole, and conclude.

I. I WOULD propose to open to you, in some *Propositions*, the Nature of a Regular *Mission* into the *Ministry*.

AND in order to this, I would observe,

I. THAT CHRIST is the Great King in his Church, and has *Authority* to appoint what Officers in it He pleases. This is undeniably plain and evident, from *Matth. xxviii. 18.* And *Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All Power is given unto me, in Heaven and in Earth.* It is observable, our Lord spoke these Words to his *Disciples* just before his giving out the grand Commission they were to act upon, as being at the Head of a Standing Ministry, and in an Office they were to be succeeded in to the End of Time. For the Commission runs not only to themselves; but to their Successors after them, to the World's End, *ver. 19, 20.* Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : Teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you : And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the End of the World. Amen.

2. AS CHRIST has *Authority* to appoint what Officers in his Church He pleases ; so he has actually declared, That He will have a standing, settled Ministry in his Church, while He has a Church in the World. *Eph. iv. 8—11, 12, 13.* Wherefore He saith,  
when



when He ascended up on high, He led Captivity captive, and gave Gifts unto Men: And He gave some Apostles; and some Prophets; and some Evangelists; and some Pastors and Teachers; for the Perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ: Till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.

3. AS CHRIST has had his extraordinary Officers in his Church, who were to continue but for a certain Time; so He has his ordinary Officers in it still, who are perpetually to be succeeded. Of the former Sort, were the Apostles, Evangelists, and Prophets; of the latter, Pastors and Teachers.

THE Apostles were extraordinary Officers. They were so, I mean, as to some Parts and Branches of their Office, as for Instance; as they were chosen by CHRIST Himself to be Witnesses of his Resurrection to the World, which was the grand Point upon which all Christianity turn'd, *Acts i. 8.* And ye shall be Witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost Part of the Earth. And we find in the same Chapter, that when the Apostles were for choosing One in Judas's Room, this was the essential Qualification of the Person to be chosen; that he had been a constant Attendant on CHRIST'S Ministry, and a Witness of his Resurrection: And so should be able upon his own Knowledge to testify what CHRIST said, and did, and suffered, and that He rose again. This was the Work and Business of an Apostle, as such, *Acts i. 21, 22.* Wherefore, of these Men which have companied with us, all the Time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us; beginning from the Baptism of John, unto the same Day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a Witness with us of his Resurrection.

AND *Paul*, that he might be much upon a Foot with these *prime Apostles*, had an extraordinary personal Appearance of *CHRIST* constituting him an *Apostle*, 1 Cor. ix. 1. *Am I not an Apostle? am I not free, have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Gal. i. 11, 12. But I certify you, Brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me, is not after Man. For I neither received it of Man, neither was I taught it, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.*

BUT over and above their being thus Witnesses to *CHRIST*, they were extraordinarily qualify'd by the *HOLY GHOST* to gather a *CHURCH* out of the World of Mankind; and had an universal Authority, and Influence given 'em in it: They were immediately inspired by the Blessed *SPIRIT*, and acted by his miraculous Power and Conduct. And in these Respects, none certainly can lay Claim to be their Successors.

AS for the standing and perpetual Part of their Office; such as Preaching the Word, Administering Sacraments, Exercising Discipline, Ordaining to the Ministerial Work, and the like: This is devolv'd now upon *Pastors* and *Teachers*; which, as you may perceive by and by, are but two Names for the same Sort of Officers.

BUT, besides *Apostles*, that were extraordinary Officers, there were *Evangelists*. Now the Business of *Evangelists*, was to be *Assistants* to the *Apostles* in Publishing the Gospel: So that they may be call'd *secondary Apostles*. *Evangelists* might preach the Gospel, where it had not been preached before, and consequently make Christians and plant Churches; but it was not necessary that they should be immediate Witnesses to *CHRIST*, as it was to the *Apostles*: Besides, they were subordinate to the *Apostles*, were sent by 'em here and there, as they saw Occasion, for Propagating the Gospel, or settling of Churches.

AGAIN,

AGAIN, another Sort of *extraordinary Officers*, that were at first in the Church, were *Prophets*. Now these, by an extraordinary Measure of the Spirit, were wonderfully qualify'd to interpret the *Scriptures* of the *Old Testament*; to preach to those that had embrac'd the *Christian Faith*; and to point out Persons to the *Ministry*, that were eminently well-qualify'd for it, and would be eminently successful in it. Thus *Timothy*, 'tis thought, was chose, *1 Tim. iv. 14. Neglect not the Gift that is in thee, which was given thee by Prophecy.* And 'tis very likely, that the *Holy Ghost* spoke by the *Prophets* that were at *Antioch*, to have *Barnabas* and *Saul* separated for special Work, *Acts xiii. 1, 2.*

BUT as CHRIST had *extraordinary Officers* in his Church, who were to continue but for a certain Time; so He has his *ordinary Officers* in it still, who are to be of perpetual Use and Service. And these, as was observ'd before, are call'd *Pastors* and *Teachers*. Therefore,

4. I WOULD observe, That of the *ordinary Officers*, that CHRIST has appointed in his Church, the *Scriptures* make only Mention of *Two* Sorts; the first, *Presbyters*, or, which is but another Scripture Name for the same Thing, *Bishops*: And the other *Deacons*. Thus in the Church of *Philippi* we find no other Church-Officers mention'd, but these *Two*, *Phil. i. 1. Paul and Timotheus the Servants of Jesus Christ, to all the Saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi with the Bishops and Deacons.* Paul writing to *Timothy* about Church-Officers, *1 Tim. iii.* mentions Qualifications for none but *Bishops* and *Deacons*. And the Qualifications for *Bishops* are the same, that *Paul* writing to *Titus* acquaints him of, when he left him in *Crete* to ordain *Elders* in every City, *Tit. i. 5, 6, 7.* The same Officer, who is call'd an *Elder*, or *Presbyter*, in the 5th verse, is call'd a *Bishop* in the 7th, For a



*Bishop must be blameless.* Thus the Elders of the Church of *Ephesus*, whom the *Apostle* call'd to him at *Miletus*, Acts xx. 17, are ver. 28. call'd *Bishops*. Our Translation has it *Overseers*: But the Word in the Original is *ἐπισκόπος*, which signifies *Bishops*. And if I be not mistaken, this is the only Place in all the *New Testament*, in which it is not so translated, nor can any Account be given why it should not be thus translated here.

IT will now be generally allow'd, that the Names are common; but in Propriety it ought to be said, that these are but two Names for one and the same Sort of Officers: Since there are no *Presbyters* in *Scripture*, but what are *Bishops*; and there is no Sett of *Bishops* in *Scripture* above *Presbyters*; and which is more, there are no Orders given for ordaining any such. If any shall still say, granting this, that they are but two Names for one and the same Sort of Officers; yet we deny that *Presbyters* in *Scripture*, or if you please to call 'em so, your *Scripture-Bishops*, have any Power to ordain. As to this Point, it will come presently in our Way to discourse of it.

BUT upon the Proposition we are now prosecuting, I would remark something of the other Sort of Officers, that are mention'd in it, *Deacons*.

(1.) THAT their *Business* was to take Care of the Church's Stock, and to make a wise Distribution of it among its indigent Members. The *Apostle* styles it a *serving of Tables*, Acts vi. 2.

(2.) THAT the Reason of instituting this as a distinct Office, was a particular Emergency; which was the *Murmuring* of the *Græcians* against the *Hebrews*, because their *Widows* were neglected in the daily *Ministration*, ver. 1. Had it not been for this, it does not at all appear, that the Office of a *Deacon*, as a distinct Office, would have been appointed; but that the Distribution of the Church's Money



Money would have been made as before, that is, by general Orders from the *Apostles*, Acts iv. 35. *And they laid them down at the Apostles Feet; and Distribution was made unto every Man, according as he had Need.* But this Contest arising between the *Greeks* and *Hebrews*; and the *Apostles* finding this Matter would be too great a Diversion to 'em in the Discharge of a higher, and a much more noble Function, *Prayer*, and the *Ministry of the Word*; they appoint *Deacons* on Purpose to look after this very Business, ver. 2. *Then the Twelve call'd the Multitude of the Disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason, that we should leave the Word of God, and serve Tables. Wherefore,* ver. 3. *Brethren, look ye out Seven Men, whom we may appoint over this Business. But we,* ver. 4. *will give our selves continually to Prayer and to the Ministry of the Word.*

(3) THE *Qualifications* here pointed to for this Office were of an extraordinary Nature; for, say the *Apostles*, ver. 3. *Look ye out among you Seven Men of honest Report, full of the Holy Ghost and Wisdom.* And if we turn to 1 Cor. xii. where the *Apostle* is speaking of the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghost, he mentions, ver. 8. this of *Wisdom* to be one. And there being in the Church at this Time such Persons, that had these Gifts, they were extremely fit for this Office: But then for these Reasons, tho' the Office, as to the Substance of it, is to continue, (that is to say, tho' there are to be those that are to take Care of the Churches-Stock, and to see that Distribution be made according to the true Intention of the Persons that give it;) yet not to continue in that special Formality, 'tis mention'd under here. For when any Act, or Law is founded upon particular Reasons, it doth no farther oblige, than as the Reasons of it do continue.

## 14 CHURCH-OFFICERS, and

5. STRICTLY speaking, the *Essence* of the *Ministerial Call* and *Mission*, consists in Persons *Qualifiedness* for the Work, and a *real serious Devotedness* to it. There must be a *Qualifiedness* for the Work. It is certain, that GOD sends out none that are Unqualify'd. Those that are not *apt to teach*, are unfit to be Ministers. The *Holy Ghost* has very particularly laid down in *1 Tim. iii.* and in *Tit. i. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.* what are to be the *Qualifications* of *Gospel-Ministers*: And if any ordain Persons, that appear in the Main destitute of *These*, they only send forth *Creatures* of their own; they do not send forth *Ministers* of CHRIST. For this Reason Ordainers should have Time, that they may know who they are to *lay Hands upon*. Hence that Caution of Paul to Timothy, *1 Tim. v. 22. Lay Hands suddenly on no Man.*

AND as there must be a *Qualifiedness* for the Work, so there must be a *Devotedness* to it. CHRIST will have none to be employ'd in his Work, that are not free to it. The Office must be the Object of Desire; and Persons sincere Intentions must be to serve the Lord JESUS CHRIST in it, *1 Tim. iii. 1. If any Man desire the Office of a Bishop, he desireth a good Work.* Whatever Backwardness there may be in good Men, arising from the Difficulty and Awefulness of the Work and Office; yet there must be a prevailing Willingness wrought in them by the Spirit of GOD to undertake it.

MOSES at first was very backward to go upon a particular Errand, that GOD had a Mind to send him upon, to go to *Pharaoh*; he makes Abundance of Objections, starts this and the other Difficulty, and in Effect tells GOD at last, he would not go, *Exod. iv. 13. Send I pray Thee, by the Hand of him whom Thou wilt send.* GOD condescended to answer his Objections, and overcame

came his Unwillingness in the End. CHRIST will receive none into his Service that are not willing for it. *Here I am, says Isaiah, Send me, Isa. vi. 8.*

IN this *Qualifiedness* for the Work, and *Devotedness* to it, strictly speaking, lies the *Essence* of the *Ministerial Mission*. And the Reason of this is plain, because GOD has signified in his Word, that He will have such as These to be Ministers; Persons of these Qualifications, and of this Devotedness. And it is the Will of CHRIST, that gives every Minister his Commission. Ordainers give but the *Investiture*, the *Commission* is from CHRIST. We have this Matter illustrated thus by the late excellent, and learned Mr. Baxter; "If the Sovereign Power, *says he*, makes a Law, "That there shall be Physicians licens'd by a College of Physicians to practice in the Commonwealth, and describes the Persons, that shall be so licens'd: This plainly *first*, concludeth, "That such Persons shall be Physicians: But *secondly, de ordine*, That they shall be thus licens'd. So that if the College should licence a Company of insufficient Men, and Murderers, that seek Mens Death; or refuse to licence the Persons qualified according to Law: They may themselves be punish'd; and the qualified Persons may act as authorized by that which bindeth *quoad Materiam*; and the Law is frustrate *quoad Ordinem* by the College, not by them."

AND I cannot but think with another very Ingenious Person, " \* That this is a very rational Account of the Matter; and such as may give all Christians Satisfaction of the Truth of their Church's Ministry and Ordinances, without flying up into the Clouds; and inventing the " *Mysteries*

\* Mr. Tong.



“ Myſteries of uninterrupted Succeſſion, indeli-  
 “ ble Characters, and the like.”

OUR SAVIOUR'S *Criterion* about *Prophets*, is,  
*By their Fruits ye ſhall know them*, Matth. vii. 16.  
 By their *Doctrine*, and their *Works*; and it is a  
*Criterion* that will be of *Uſe* in every *Age*. He  
 does not point to a *Line*, which we in our *Times*  
 muſt go above Sixteen Hundred Years backward  
 for; and which no *Body* in the *World*, that ever  
 I could underſtand, is able to make out. But  
 then,

6. To prevent all diſorderly *Intruſions* of *un-  
 fit* and *unqualified* *Perſons* into the *Ministry*, GOD  
 has eſtabliſh'd this *Order*; That all that deſire the  
*Office*, ſhall have their *Abilities* try'd and approv'd  
 of by *competent Judges*, and ſo ſolemnly ſet a-part  
 for the *Work*. And an *Inſtitution* of CHRIST'S  
 in every *Matter* muſt be ſubmitted to, and obey'd;  
 and this is evidently one of them, 2 *Tim.* ii. 2.  
*And the Things that thou haſt heard of me, among  
 many Witneſſes, the ſame commit thou to faithful  
 Men, who may be able to teach others alſo.* Thus  
 Paul tells *Titus*, That he had left him in *Crete*,  
*Tit.* i. 5. that ſo he might ſet in order the *Things* that  
 were wanting, and ordain *Elders* in every *City*, as he  
 had appointed him. And that he might do this to  
 the beſt *Purpose*, he tells him, what were to be  
 the *Qualifications* of the *Perſons* he was to or-  
 dain. He was not ſuddenly to lay *Hands* on any, no  
 more than *Timothy* was; but to know who they  
 were he ordain'd, before he did it.

AFTER this Manner it was, that *Paul* and  
*Barnabas* were ſeparated to the *Work*, to which the  
*Holy Ghoſt* had called them, *Acts* xiii. 1, 2. And af-  
 ter the ſame Manner they ordained *Elders* in the  
 ſeveral *Churches* to which they went, *Acts* xiv. 23.  
*Timothy* was ſet a-part by the *Laying on of the Hands*  
 of the *Presbyters*, 1 *Tim.* iv. 14.

7. PRESBYTERS,



7. PRESBYTERS, or which is the same in Scripture, *Bishops*, as they are in the *Ministerial Office* themselves, so they have a *Power* to invest others with it. This is a *Proposition* which to be sure will be deny'd; and therefore we are to see, how far the *Scripture* will help us to prove it; and to do this the more clearly, let's see, what *Spiritual Power* will (by those that oppose us in the Point we are upon) be allow'd to *Presbyters* by the Word of GOD. Now it will be allow'd, that by the Word of GOD *Presbyters* have Authority to pray, and to preach the Word, and to administer the Sacraments\*: And in the *Bishop's* Absence at least (taking the Word in the Modern Sense) to exercise Discipline: And if they have a Power to exercise it in his Absence, they must have an inherent Power before. But now we go farther, and say, That by the Word of GOD they have a *Power* to ordain others to the Office. But this being deny'd; we must try, if we can't prove it. And in order hereunto, I observe,

(I.) THAT the *Power* to preach the Gospel, and administer the Sacraments, is at least equal, if not superior to the Power of setting Persons a-part for the Ministry. Now 'tis past all Dispute, that *Presbyters*, by the Word of GOD, have the former; and One would therefore be very much inclin'd to think, that it is reasonable to infer, they have the latter too. Can any Thing be greater, than for Persons to treat with Men, as *Ambassadors* for Christ? Why, this belongs to the *Presbyter's* Office; since to him is committed the Ministry of Reconciliation, 2 Cor. v. 20. Now then we as *Ambassadors* for Christ, as tho' God did beseech you by us: We pray you in Christ's Stead, be ye reconciled to God. Again, *Presbyters* have a Right to minister both the Sacraments; and this must be superior

\* 1 Tim. iii. 2. 1 Pet. v. 2. Acts xx. 28.

to the *Power of Ordination* : For no Body makes a *Sacrament of Ordination*, that I know of, but the *Pastors*. Indeed, What is it but an *Investiture* into an *Office* ? And this being but a Matter of Order, may be done by Equals, full as well as by Superiors.

BUT granting, *will some say*, the *Inferiority of Ordination*, compar'd with some Parts of the *Ministerial Office* ; yet it will by no Means follow, that *this* must be added to the rest ; because God may give spiritual Powers in what Proportion and Measure He pleases ; so that tho' He has given *Presbyters* the other ; yet He may have restrain'd them in this. Now in Case an actual Restraint can once be made out by the Word of God, I very freely grant this : But where the Scripture has made no such Limitation, no Body else has Authority to do it.

To tell us, That *Timothy* was sent to *Ephesus*, and *Titus* to *Crete*, in order to ordain ; will no more prove that *Ordination* was restrain'd to them, than if the *Apostle* had seen fit to have sent them to those Places to preach, would have prov'd, that Preaching did not belong to the *Presbyters Office*. And if we look over the *Epistles* the *Apostle* writes to 'em, we shall find a great many more Directions given 'em, how to manage themselves in *Preaching*, than how to manage themselves in the *Business of Ordination*.

THE Truth of it is, in such new-planted Churches, there was great Need of the Assistance of Persons of such Abilities, Conduct, and Experience, as *Timothy* and *Titus* were, either in the one Matter or in the other ; especially in *Crete*, where it does not appear, that there were any *Presbyters* at all, when the *Apostle* left *Titus* there.

As little Satisfaction is it to tell us out of the *Revelations*, That CHRIST in writing to the Churches of *Asia*, directs to the *Angels* of such  
and

and such a Church: For supposing, that by *Angel* is to be understood a particular Person, which is far from being clear; yet the Style may with as much Propriety belong to a Pastor-Presbyter, as a Pastor-Bishop. Dr. Lightfoot \* tells us, That among the *Jews* the publick Minister of every Synagogue, was call'd the *Angel of the Church*. And yet this is the Sum of what the Scripture-Evidence on one Side amounts to. But,

(2.) I WOULD observe, by Way of Proof, in the next Place, That there is but one Commission, by which all Gospel-Ministers are to act; and therefore their Powers must be equal, and consequently there must be the Power of Ordination amongst the Rest. The Inference is plain, because the same Commission given to several Persons, gives equal Powers: For what Powers such Persons have, they have from the Commission, and the Commission gives 'em all alike. Now the great Commission upon which Gospel-Ministers act, is that in *Matth. xxviii. 19, 20.* Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all Things, whatsoever I have commanded you: And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the End of the World. Amen. Here we see First, That this Commission is granted to the Apostles, and their Successors in the Ministerial Office; as is evident from our SAVIOUR's saying, that He would be with them to the End of the World. Secondly, That all the Powers that are necessary to the Continuance of a Gospel-Ministry, are convey'd by this Commission; and so the Apostles and their Successors had a Power by it to ordain others to their Work and Office. Thirdly, That this Power of Ordaining others, is included under Discipling, Baptizing, Teaching to observe, &c.



as the less is included under the greater. And therefore *Fourthly*, It must belong to *Presbyters*; for the Other certainly do. Where a Divine Commission makes no Distinction, it is not for Men to make any. If *Presbyters* don't act by this Commission, it will be hard to find them another in the whole Word of GOD.

SOME indeed would have them to succeed the *Seventy*. It looks pretty strange to take Pattern for Officers in *Christ's Church*, at a Time, when the Christian Church was but a Forming. The Commissions of the *Twelve*, and the *Seventy* were but temporary. Both were immediately sent out by *Christ*, much upon the same Errand; to acquaint Men, that the Kingdom of God drew nigh; they were endued much with the same Powers of Healing the Sick, cureing Diseases, and casting out Devils. See *Luke ix. 1, 2.* and *Luke x. 1.—8, 9, 17.* And upon their Return the *Twelve* never, as we find, acted as publick Ministers, 'till *Christ* gave 'em a fresh Commission after his Resurrection. And as for the *Seventy*, we never hear of 'em again under that Character in Scripture: Besides the *Seventy* by Virtue of their Commission could not Baptize; to be sure they could not Administer the LORD'S-Supper by it, for it was not then instituted.

BUT to clear this Matter yet farther; I desire it may be consider'd, That CHRIST after his Resurrection issued out a double Commission to his *Apostles*; the one as they were *Apostles*, and so extraordinary Officers in his Church. This we meet with, as I take it, in *Joh. xx. 21, 22, 23.* Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you: And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever ye retain, they are retained.

As



*As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you : i. e.* As I was immediately and personally sent by my FATHER ; so you are immediately and personally sent by me ; as I received the *Holy Ghost* without Measure, was *anointed* with it *above my Fellows* ; so do you receive the Inspiration of the *Holy Ghost* to lead you into all Truth ; which I now confer by Breathing it upon you ; Receive ye the *Holy Ghost*. As I wrought Miracles, which none ever did ; so I impower you to work Miracles in my Name. *Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retained.* By Sins here, I think, we are to understand the penal Effects of Sin. See *Matth. ix. 2.* and *Whitby in Loc.* And so by the *Apostles* Power to remit, &c. we are to understand the Power, that they had over bodily Diseases, to remove, or inflict 'em. It is evident from the Words themselves, that the Remitting, or Loosing of Sins in Heaven were consequent to the Remitting or Loosing of 'em upon Earth ; and so *vice versa*. See *Matth. xviii. 18.* Now this is exactly true, if it be taken to refer to the Power which the *Apostles* had to remove bodily Distempers, or inflict them: For no sooner did they go about it, but it was ratified in Heaven ; by a Divine Power the Thing was done. To refer this Remitting or Retaining Sin, to a Power of declaring, that Mens Sins were pardon'd or not, is too jejune a Sense, I think, to be the true one here. This would make the *Apostles* Remitting, and Retaining Sins, to be only a Consequent of what's done in Heaven ; which is contrary to the Tenour of the Words.

Now if this be the true Sense of the Text, it appearing to be most unforc'd and natural, it can belong to no Body, but the *Apostles* themselves.

BUT then there's another Commission, which CHRIST issued out to the *Apostles*, which is that in *Matth.*

*Matth. xxviii.* Now there is Nothing in that, but what may belong to the Ministers of the Gospel, who are the *Apostles* Successors in the standing and perpetual Part of their Office. As for *Discipling of Nations*, that's merely circumstantial, and depends upon a divine providential Conduct; there have been Ministers since the *Apostles* Time, that have preach'd the Gospel to *Gentile Nations*, and have discipled some of 'em. And as for the *Discipling All*; the *Apostles* neither did, nor could do it: But it is to be hoped, it will be done, when *the Kingdoms of the World shall become the Kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ.*

(3.) THAT *Presbyters* have Power to Ordain into their Office, will farther appear from the *Instances* we have of *Presbyters Ordaining* in Scripture. If *Presbyters* in Scripture-times did ordain, to be sure they had an Original Inherent Power for it. Now we have *Two* very clear *Instances* of this Kind. The *First* is of the *Presbyters Ordaining Timothy*. 1. Tim. iv. 14. *Neglect not the Gift that is in thee, which was given thee by Prophecy, with the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery.* 'Tis to be observ'd, that the Word here us'd in the Original is but us'd in *Two* other Places in all the *New Testament*, Luke xxii. 66. Acts xxii. 5. And in both these Places it signifies a Company of Elders. And tho' it be granted, that *Paul* did lay on Hands in *Timothy's* Ordination with the *Presbyters*; as 'tis probable he did from 2. Tim. i. 6. Where the *Apostle* gives him just the same Exhortation, as he does here in 1. Tim. iv. 14. To stir up the Gift of God, that was in him: Yet this does not alter the Case: For if the *Laying on of Hands* was the Ordaining Act in *Paul*, it was the Ordaining Act in the *Presbyters*; and consequently must argue the same Ordaining Power in them; and it is in the very same Manner ascrib'd to them;

as it is to the *Apostle*, and to the very same Purpose; and the same Exhortation follows upon it. This is such an express Testimony, that I can't imagine, how any thing can come up more fully to a Point.

SOME indeed would suggest, that they were not mere Presbyters, that lay'd on Hands in *Timothy's* Ordination. We grant, that they were not, what they that make the Objection may call so; for we know of no such in Scripture-Times; but we have Reason to think, they were those, that the Scripture calls by that Name. And to clear this, I desire it may be consider'd (what some Learned Men have made out) that the *Apostles* fram'd; the Churches after the Fashion of the *Jewish* Synagogues \*. Now as the Names of Presbyters, was taken from the *Jewish* Elders; so 'tis likely there was a great Analogy, and Correspondence in their Office; and 'twas a stated Rule † among them, that they that were ordain'd Elders themselves might ordain Others: Tho' this was afterwards restrain'd; yet it did not at all prejudice their Original Right. Now Nothing in the World can be more conformable to this Notion than the Presbyters || Laying on Hands here in *Timothy's* Ordination.

BUT

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\* " Totum Regimen Ecclesiarum Christi Conformatum fuit ad Synagogarum exemplar. *Grotius*.

" Præsides et Curatores Ecclesiarum ad instar Presbyterorum Synagogæ Judaicæ constant. *Salmasius*. See *Stillingsfleet*. *Irenic*. Part. 2. C. 6. Sect. 4.

† *Lightfoot* Harm. Vol. 1. p. 612. *Selden* de Syned. C. 14. *Stillingsfleet* *Iren*. P. 2. Ch. 6. Sect. 13.

|| If we determine Things by Importance of Words, and Things signified by them, the Power of Ordination was proper to the Name, Πρεσβύτερος, and not Ἐπίσκοπος, because the former did then import the Power, and not the latter. *Stillingsfleet's* *Irenic*. Part. 2. Ch. 6. Sect. 15.



BUT suppose, they were somewhat more than *Presbyters*, 'tis plain from the Text, that the *Apostle* attributes the Ordaining of *Timothy* to 'em under that Notion and Character; which he would not have done, did it not belong to 'em under it.

As for the Saying of Others; that the *Presbyters* might only Lay on Hands to express their Consent: There's no Foundation at all in the Text for any such Sense. *Laying on of Hands* is attributed to the *Apostle*, and *Presbyters* just alike. And if either must lay on Hands to express Consent, it sounds, certainly better, that the *Apostle* should do it rather than the *Presbyters*: For if the latter had not the Ordaining Power, they had no Business to express their Consent at all; or if there had been Occasion for this, there were other Ways of doing it, than by concurring in the Ordaining Act. But to proceed.

THE Other Instance of *Presbyters* Ordaining in Scripture is in *Acts* xiii. 1, 2, 3. Now there were in the Church, that was at Antioch, certain *Prophets*, and *Teachers*; as *Barnabas*, and *Simeon*, that was call'd *Niger*, and *Lucius* of *Cyrene*, and *Manaen*, which had been brought up with *Herod the Tetrarch*, and *Saul*. As they ministred to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me *Barnabas*, and *Saul*, for the Work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted, and prayed, and laid their Hands on them, they sent them away. Now they, who are said to Ordain *Barnabas*, and *Saul* here, were the *Prophets* and *Teachers*. Now *Teachers* were Ordinary teaching \* *Presbyters*; and these the Holy Ghost Orders to Separate *Barnabas* and *Saul*. 'Tis said, that they fasted, and prayed, and laid their Hands on them. And if this be'n't Ordaining, there's no such Thing. No Men, or Ministers

can

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\* Eph. iv. 2.

can do more in it, than this amounts to. To say, that it was only for a special Work and Service, makes it never the less an Ordination. 'Twas all the Human Ordination for any Thing that appears, that either *Paul* or *Barnabas* had.

By this time, I hope, 'tis plain from *Scripture*, that *Presbyters*, that are in Office, may invest Others with it; which was the Thing to be prov'd.

8. AND lastly, We are to observe, that the Way in which Persons are to be invested with the Ministerial Office, is by *Fasting*, and *Prayer*, and *Laying on of Hands*. Thus *Timothy* was ordain'd; and thus the *Prophets*, and *Teachers* separated *Barnabas*, and *Saul*. As for Imposition of Hands, 'tis a very proper, and significant Rite; 'twas us'd in the *Old Testament* in Appointing to an Office, and Devolving of a Charge. *Numb.* xxvii. 8, 23. 'Twas a Sign that accompanied Benediction, *Gen.* xlvii. 14, 20. And in both these Respects 'tis significant in the Business of Ordination. The *Jewish Elders* \* were set apart to their Office this Way. And the *Holy Ghost* in the *New Testament* makes *laying on of Hands* to stand for the Whole of Ordination, *1. Tim.* v. 22.

By this Train of Propositions, I have brought down the Matter to the Business of the Day. And 'tis high Time now to proceed to the *Second General* propos'd; but this, and the *Application* I shall dispatch with all Brevity.

II. I AM to evince the Necessity of the Mission, I have been thus long speaking of, and Opening.

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\* " In Archisynagogy, & Senioribus Synagogæ, idem Observatum, unde Mos *χρηγεδοίας* ad Christianos tranſiet. *Grotius*.

And, 1. It is *necessary*, that there should be a *Mission* before Men stately undertake the Ministerial Work; because GOD has *plainly enough declared*, that 'tis his *Mind*, and *Will* it should be so. In the *Old Testament* not only the *High-Priest*, but the other *Priests*; and the *Levites* were by GOD's Appointment inaugurated into their Office: And it was to a very high Degree dangerous for any to offer at it; that were not thus designated, and appointed, *Numb. iii. 10. and xviii. 7.* If we descend into the *New Testament*, we shall find that none of all our LORD's Disciples assum'd the Ministerial Work, and Office; till they had a Commission from CHRIST himself for it: And as they were appointed by CHRIST; so they appointed, and ordained Others. Thus *Titus* was left in *Crete* on Purpose to ordain Elders. *Tit. i. 5.* *Timothy* was to *commit the Things* he had heard of *Paul* to *Faithful Men*, who should be able to teach others also, *2 Tim. ii. 3.* Being ordain'd to the Office himself, he was to ordain Others to it.

AND in Pursuance to this Order, this has been the Practice of the Christian Church from the Apostolical Age to the present.

2. A MISSION into the Ministry is *necessary*; because the *Nature* of the Office calls for it. Ministers are called *Embassadors*. *2. Cor. v. 20.* Now none can be *Embassadors* without a Commission. They are stiled *Stewards*. *Tit. i. 7.* *For a Bishop must be blameless, as the Steward of God.* So, *1. Cor. iv. 1.* *Let a Man so Account of us, as Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God.* Now a *Steward* of the Household ought to be over the Masters setting of it. *Luke xii. 42.* *And the Lord said, who then is that faithful and wise Steward, whom the Lord shall make Ruler over his Household.* Again, Ministers are call'd *Co-workers*



workers with GOD. 2. Cor. vi. 1. *We then as Workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain.* Now certainly it's very fit, that GOD should Choose them, whom he will co-work with.

3. A MISSION into the Ministry is necessary, from the Reason of the Thing. The most solemn, and Sacred Office in the World as this of the Ministry is; which relates to GOD, and Mens Immortal Souls, ought to have particular Care taken of it, and a Special Guard set about it; and shou'd be enter'd on with the greatest Deliberation, Caution, and Solemnity.

PERSONS cannot in Civil Societies sustain any Publick Character without a proper Investiture. A Man cannot be a Justice of Peace without a Commission from the Civil Authority; nor Act as a Constable, or an Inferior Officer, but he must be sworn; nor can practise Physick ordinarily without a Licence; And there's no Body almost but ownst these to be very wise Constitutions. And if they are so in the State, they cannot be otherwise in the Church, where so very much depends on the Ministerial Work, and Office.

4. A MISSION into the Ministry is necessary to prevent the Intrusions of Unfit, and Unqualified Persons into it. If due Care be not taken Persons unfit for the Work will undertake it. A very little Knowledge with a great deal of Assurance will make Abundance in the World fancy, that they are fit for Ministers, and able to teach Others; who are very far from it: And by this Means the Dignity of the Office is expos'd; The Usefulness of it in a great Measure sunk; the Distinction, that the Scriptures every where make between Ministers and People comes to be lost, and their distinct Duties overlook't, and neglected: And what is like to be the Consequence of this any

Body may imagine. When once Fences are broke down, Disorders, and Confusions must of Course follow.

5. AND lastly, A *Mission* into the *Ministry* is necessary, that *Persons* upon good *Grounds* may expect the *Presence* of *GOD* with them to *succeed*, and *bless* 'em in their *Work*. And this is what none have good Reason to expect, but such whom *GOD* sends. *Jer. xxiii. 21. I have not sent these Prophets, yet they ran. Ver. 31. Behold I am against the Prophets, saith the Lord, that use their Tongues, and say, He saith. Ver. 32. — Yet I sent them not, nor commanded them.*

III. And Lastly, I AM now to draw *Two* or *Three* Inferences from the Whole, and Conclude. The *first* Inference shall be directed to those, that are now to be invested in the Ministerial Office. The *Second* to those of *Us*, that are actually in it. The *third* shall be directed to our People in general.

I. THEN from what has been said, I would direct a Word to *Those*, that are now to be invested in the Ministerial Office. You see your *Calling*, *Brethren*; and I think, you don't need to be put much in Mind by me of the Sacredness of the Office, you are to be invested with; of the Awfulness of the Work, you are to undertake; of the Weight, and Compass, and Greatness of the Charge you are to enter upon. It is a *Watching* for *Souls*, as *Those* that must give an *Account*, *Heb. xiii. 17. O! See that your Hearts* in the main be not only Right with *GOD*; but that they be very solemn in your giving up your selves to *GOD* in the Work of the Ministry.

YOU may perhaps be ready to say under a Sense of your own Weakness, and the great Difficulties that attend the Work: *Who is sufficient?* And no Wonder, that you should say so since an *Apostle* said it before you. Those that have most Grace, and are the Best qualified for the Work, are usually the most sensible how Unequal they are to it. Humility is an excellent Preparative: CHRIST either finds his Ministers humble; or if he designs remarkably to own, and bless them, He'll find some Way or other to make 'em so. We must be emptied of our selves, before we can with a right Spirit and Frame preach up a *Crucified Master*, as the *Head of the Body the Church*. It shou'd be the Business of CHRIST'S Ministers upon all Accounts to exalt Him: and this we shall hardly do, unless we are first of all abased ourselves: And when our LORD once has us at his Feet, He'll then hand out his Supplies. Wise Ordering! That the *Excellency may appear to be of God, not of Man*.

BE sure Constantly to eye your LORD; take his Work before You, as he gives it; declare the *whole Counsel of GOD*; whether Men *will bear*, or whether they will *forbear*, be Faithful; Constantly look up to CHRIST for Strength, and present Encouragement; and trust Him for your future Reward.

2. FROM what has been said, I would direct a Word too, to *Those* of us, that are *actually in the Ministry*. Every Ordination, that we see, or are engag'd in, should put Us in Mind of our Own; should put Us upon examining, how we have *fulfill'd our Ministry*: What we have done with that Sacred *Depositum* of Truth, Order, and Duty, that was committed unto us. We should *stir up the Gift of God, which is in us*, as Paul exhorts Timothy to do. 1 Tim. iv. 14. which was given Us  
by



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## 30 CHURCH-OFFICERS, and

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by the *laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery.*

WE must not hide any of our LORD's *Talents* in a *Napkin*; but Use every one of 'em for Him, as He calls for 'em.

CHRIST of late has been calling his † Ministers very fast to himself. Now we, that are left, should take Care (as they did who are gone.) of a Succession: That so the Work may not die with us. We should *commit that*, which was committed to us to *faithful Men*, that may be *able to teach Others also*: We should ordain Others to the Work, that may stand up in our Pulpits, and Preach CHRIST, when we are dead, and gone; Plead his Cause with Men, when our Heads are laid in silent Dust, and we can speak for him no longer.

THIS is awefull Work, and should be perform'd with awefull Frames. We are to look up to CHRIST for Assistance, and Acceptance in it. But,

3. THE *Inference*, with which I conclude, shall be *directed* to our People in general. From what has been said, you may see, that unto Us is *committed* the *Ministry of Reconciliation*; and that to you it is sent. And *this Ministry* is as necessary now, as ever; and will be necessary, as long as Mens Enmities continue, which will be as long as there are Men, and Women upon Earth. Let us therefore entreat you, that you *receive not the Grace of God in vain*. We, as *Embassadours for Christ*, beseech You; as tho' God did beseech You by Us: We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 2. Cor. v. 20. To die under the *Ministry of Reconciliation*, of all Things must be the most

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† The Reverend Mr. M. Henry, Mr. Shower, Dr. Williams, Mr. Flemming, Mr. Merrel of Coventry, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Freke.

dreadful. 'Tis a very solemn Charge, which is given to your Ministers: You may read it at your Leisure. 2. *Tim.* iv. 1. 2. And if such a Solemn Charge belongs to them; Serious Attention to 'em, and Improvement under 'em belongs to You. Believe it, Sirs, if you will not be your Faithful Ministers *Crown*; they must be your *Condemnation*; and this will be very sad for You.

As for the Contempt, that the World pours on us, 'tis a very small Thing with us; we are pleas'd with our Work, and we are satisfied with our Call; and if the Lord does but *give us Grace* to be found *Faithful*, we don't doubt, but He'll at last own us, and reward us too, as his Ministers. If there is any Thing, we desire, it is to have you that attend our Ministry to be the *Seals* of it: To be our *Epistle*. 2. *Cor.* iii. 2. *Known and read of all Men*; and *Letters of Commendation*.

THERE were Those, that thought it necessary to serve some Ends of their own, to deny the great *Apostle's Mission*, I mean St. Pauls: But he tells the *Corinthians*, that if Others call'd his Mission into Question, they had no Reason at all to do so; since the saving Effects of his Ministry was found among them: 1. *Cor.* ix. 1, 2. *Am I not an Apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not you my Work in the Lord? If I be not an Apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the Seal of mine Apostleship are ye in the Lord.* How happy is it! when Ministers and People thus mutually reflect Lustre, and Comfort on each other. It is to be hop'd that there are few faithful Ministers but have some Seals given 'em of their Ministry: But if we should not have so many, as we may desire, and long, and pray for; yet

yet 'tis our Duty to go on: And if *Israel* be not gathered, it will be dreadful for *Israel*; yet faithful Ministers shall be glorious in the Eyes of the Lord, Isa. xlix. 5. And their God shall be their Strength.

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